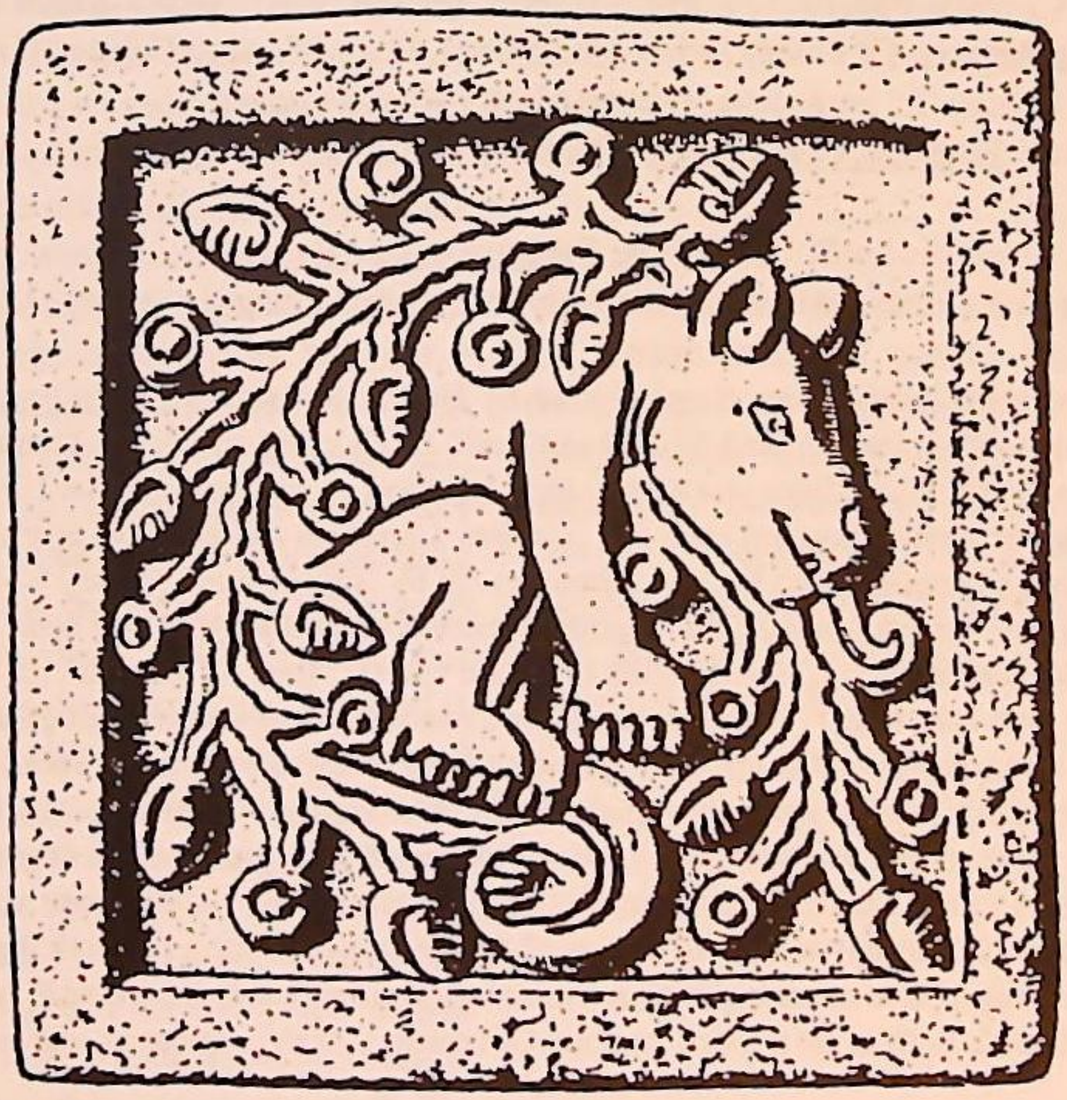
The Cryptozoology Review

Vol. 2, No. 1, Summer 1997

Editor/Publisher: Ben S. Roesch
Associate Editor: John Moore

Contents of this Issue:

P 2. The Editor's Page
P 3. Letters and Communications / Erratum
P 4. A Compendium of Cryptids™
P 17. Two Possible Cryptids from Precolumbian Mesoamerica by Andrew D. Gable
P 26. Another Caddy Carcass? by Darren Naish
P 30. Reviews and Resources
P 32. End Page



The Editor's Page

Welcome to the fourth issue of *The Cryptozoology Review*. We hope you have enjoyed every issue. With this issue we have entered our second year, and for some subscribers it is time to renew. If you are one of these subscribers, you will find a notice enclosed with this issue. Please send your renewal dues as quickly as possible, to avoid missing any issues.

I have recently moved, and so the editorial/subscription address has changed. The new address is on the back of this issue in the End Page section. If you have sent any mail to our old address previous to this issue, it should have been forwarded to my new address, but if you received any returned mail, please resend it!

Finally, I want to again bring up the topic of increased production quality for *TCR*. On the questionnaire distributed with Vol. 1 No. 2, I asked you if you would pay extra (about $9-10 Canadian, on top of current subscription prices) for a magazine/newsletter format (A4 folded, stapled, better picture quality) for *TCR*. Of the few questionnaires that were returned, the overwhelming majority was "yes." However, since it is time for many of you to resubscribe, I would like to ask this question again. When you resubscribe, I would be very grateful if you could include a short note giving your opinion on the matter. Thanks!

Once again, thank you for your continuing support and we hope you enjoy this issue.

-- Ben S. Roesch

Editor/Publisher: Ben S. Roesch
Associate Editor: John Moore
Contributing Editors: Bufo Calvin, Darren Naish, Gordon Rutter
Correspondents: Dr Peter Darben (Australia), Peter Massaro (United Kingdom)
Artists: Darren Naish, Russ Fletcher
Editorial Consultants: Ellen D. Timiney, Robert Tuck Jr.

© 1997, The Cryptozoology Review.
On The Cover : An Aztec hieroglyphic of the ahuízotl. See pp. 17-25.

The Cryptozoology Review is published three times a year by Ben S. Roesch. Subscriptions are (in Canadian currency) $9.00 in Canada, $11.00 (air mail) in the US, and $14.00 (air mail) in all other countries. Sample copies and back issues are $3.00 (Canadian) in Canada, $4.00 (Canadian) elsewhere, each. Method of payment: In the US and Canada, you may pay by personal check, money order, or well-concealed cash (all in either Canadian funds or the equivalent in US funds). In other countries, you can pay by well-concealed cash (in any currency), or by International Money Order (in US or Canadian funds only, please). If you pay in any currency other than Canadian, please make sure that you send the amount equivalent to the subscription rate. All checks and money orders should be made out to "Ben S. Roesch". If there are any problems with payment, contact the editor (see End Page). Also, for those that run their own cryptozoological publications, keep in mind that we are always willing to exchange subscriptions, as long as the relative prices are about equal. How you can help: If you are interested in contributing your cryptozoological artistic, writing and/or editing skills to TCR, please contact the editor. We take unsolicited manuscripts and artwork! Send the editor anything you think we might be interested in, and we will take a look and get back to you. There are no contributor's guidelines, but please write your article professionally and fully-referenced. We are non-profit, so payment is in copies (2 for an article, 1 for a review). Legal stuff: Everything in TCR is copyrighted! Please do not reproduce anything without permission. If you ask us, we will very likely say yes (as long as you tell us what for), and it'll save both of us a lot of trouble. Of course you may quote us and our articles, but please credit it properly. Thanks!

Letters and Communications

We welcome letters on any thoughts you may have about TCR or is contents. If you write us a letter, please tell us whether or not it is fine with you to publish it in the "Letters and Communications" section of upcoming issues.

Ogopogo Sighting

John Moore (no relation to the associate editor) sent us this report of a possible sighting he had of Ogopogo, Lake Okanagan's monster.

In July 1993, at about 6:30 PM, I was on a hill about 500 ft above the east side of Lake Okanagan, which is about six miles north of Penticton, B.C (and on which I grew up). It was an evening where the hot Okanagan sun was often shadowed by large cumulus clouds, creating an interesting effect of bright light and shadow on the lake and mountains. There was no traffic on the lake, and no waves. I noticed something creating a wake in the middle of the lake (about a 1/2 to 3/4 mile away), that I can best describe as a horses' head protruding about six feet from the water at the front of the wake (I could not discern any part of the object underwater). It looked like a knight from a chessboard was crossing the lake. It never submerged while I was observing, and it continued moving slowly in a straight line in a western heading. I watched the object for some time, then left (I had a 7:00 PM dinner reservation). When I arrived at the restaurant, which also overlooked the lake, the object was gone. I had at one point thought that what I saw was a deadhead (partly submerged log), because the head didn't appear to move at all, but deadheads don't tend to disappear quickly. Also, if it had been a deadhead, at the speed it had been progressing it could not have made shore, and thus disappear, in the time it took me to get to the restaurant. I'm quite sure that it was probably Ogopogo.

As an aside, I had an uncle who lived in Kelowna many years ago who claimed to have seen Ogopogo in the 1940's or 50's. He was a renowned sportsman who knew the lake and the indigenous wildlife extremely well. He said it was just a pack of otters. Another old friend lived on Anderson Lake (another large glacial lake near Lillooet). He claimed to have seen a creature fitting an Ogopogo-like description surface near his boat. He said it was most likely the biggest [expletive] sturgeon he'd ever seen. (However, he was a former Royal Canadian Air Force pilot and a renowned cocktail enthusiast, so I tend to doubt the veracity of his claims.)

John Moore
Victoria, British Columbia.

Erratum

On p. 26 of Vol. 1 No. 3 (Winter/Spring 1997), mention is made of a researcher named "Fariley" when in fact it was supposed to read "Fairley."

Send us your business card and/or samples of your publication etc. (if you have one) and we'll list you here!

Strange Magazine. PO Box 2246, Rockville, MD 20847 USA. Excellent professionally produced and well-written magazine, dealing with forteana and with great cryptozoology content. 4 issue subscription: $19.75 US; £14.95 UK; $24.95 Foreign. Foreign orders send US funds only, drawn on US bank. UK orders make check to "Mark Chorvinsky." Visa/Mastercard accepted.

The Bigfoot Recordings....A true story. Hear this compelling evidence of California's Bigfoot. Listen to the inside story of where and how these shocking recordings were made. Scientifically proven to be spontaneous with no sign of pre-recording or re-recording. Narrated by Jonathan Frakes of Star Trek: The Next Generation. CD $US 15.98 / Cassette $US 10.98 + 3.00 shipping and handling. Check or M.O. to The Bigfoot Recordings, 2023 E.Sims Way, Port Townsen, WA 98368.

A Compendium of Cryptids™

("All the latest cryptozoology news fit to print")

Written and Compiled by Ben S. Roesch

A Russian Lake Monster

According to residents of the rather wild and unpopulated Tver region, about 400 km (250 miles) northwest of Moscow, a Loch Ness monster-type creature inhabits nearby Lake Bronso, which is 40 m (130 ft) deep and 10 km (6 miles) long. The creature, which was supposedly first chronicled in 1854, is described as being about 5 m (16 ft) long and having a flat snake- or fish-like head and large eyes, and an "enormous tail." Overall it is said to resemble a snake.

There are few eyewitness accounts. One elderly local named Tanya who lives right on the lake with her husband claims to have seen the monster several times. She was quoted in a Reuters release that the monster is "[not] scary ... at all [and] is now on the bottom of the lake, deep, and it is hiding from the winter cold [keep in mind the report I am quoting was released in December 1996]." Another elderly woman named Varya, who lives in the lakeside village of Benyok, said she was afraid of the monster and that she was uncomfortable living in the town because "the monster could crawl into my house any day."

A panoramic picture allegedly showing the monster floating in Lake Bronso was taken recently by Moscow tourists who were camping near the lake when their seven-year-old son yelled out that he had seen a "dragon monster." According to Reuters, the photo is rather indistinct, and could just as well be a large log.

Lyudmila Bolshakova, of Moscow's Institute of Paleontology was quoted as saying that "[i]t sounds like a country fairy tale, the kind of story told over the years in the countryside." Other scientists were less cautious, and one local paleontologist suggested that the monster is a member of an extinct order of reptiles with mammal-like teeth. This seems to be a rather unsubstantiated conclusion to be made with the evidence at hand, but there may be other more detailed information which has not yet been publicised in North America. At the moment I think the best candidate for the creature is a large sturgeon; an identity which would explain the fish-like descriptions and large tail. One could even conceivably see a sturgeon as somewhat snake-like; it is elongate and is covered with scales and plates. In any respect, more sightings and/or photos will be needed in the future to help clear up the mystery of Lake Bronso's monster.

Sources: Anon. 1996a. "Loch Ness monster may have cousin in Russian lake." *Reuters*, December 10. // Anon. 1996b. "Russian monster's lore rivals Loch Ness legend." *Reuters*, December 13. // Anon. 1996c. "Russia's 'Nessie' frightens villagers." *Reuters*, December 14.

Rare Shark Rediscovered in Borneo

A species of river shark (genus *Glyphis*) was recently rediscovered in Borneo, and with the kind of permission of Sarah Fowler and the IUCN (World Conservation Union), I have republished the

official press release here:

A Shark once feared extinct is rediscovered
Press release: IUCN -- The World Conservation Union

Scientists working with the Shark Specialist Group of IUCN-The World Conservation Union, in cooperation with the Department of Fisheries, Sabah, and with assistance from WWF-Malaysia, have rediscovered one of the world's most elusive sharks in the Kinabatangan River of Sabah, in Northern Borneo, Malaysia.

The discovery was made with the invaluable help of local villagers as part of the Elasmobranch (shark and ray) Biodiversity, Conservation and Management project being carried out by the IUCN Shark Specialist Group in Sabah. This 18 month study, which is funded under the UK Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species, has been underway since January 1996.

Until last month, the Borneo River Shark (known to scientists simply as "*Glyphis* species B") was recognised from just one preserved specimen found in a museum in Vienna, taken from an unknown river in Borneo over 100 years ago. However, a small shark caught by fishermen earlier this year was kept for the Shark Specialist Group survey team by a family in a small riverside kampong (village) of Sabah. Several other juvenile River Sharks caught in the same net were photographed by the fishermen before being discarded.

The excitement of those who were shown the shark was intense. Darwin Project officer Mabel Manjaji and UK volunteers Rachel Cavanagh and Scott Mycock reported their delight over the find: "The family led us to the tank of formalin which they had been keeping locked up at the back of their stilt house, insisting that they had a shark for us in there. They looked on in bewilderment; we could barely contain ourselves - could it really be *Glyphis*? We all crowded round as the tank was opened, oblivious to the formalin fumes. 'It looks like *Glyphis* ... can it really be? ... It is!' There it was, black beady eyes, blunt snout, fins like we'd never seen before but just like those in the books - there was no doubt about it: this was *Glyphis*, at last!"

Shark Specialist Group international expert, Dr Leonard Compagno, Curator of Fishes and Head of the Shark Research Center, South African Museum, has studied the few existing museum specimens of this group, most of which were collected in the 19th Century. Compagno remarks: "We have very little idea of the geographic distribution of these sharks, much less their general biology. They show up like ghosts, few and far between, in a handful of scattered localities. External differences between the known species are subtle; I'd hesitate to place the Kinabatangan shark to species without examining it, but whether it is the Borneo River Shark or another species of *Glyphis*, this is a remarkable discovery."

Sarah Fowler, Co-chair of the IUCN Shark Specialist Group, and the UK leader of the Darwin project, was delighted at the news. "When I first contacted the Department of Fisheries in Sabah, asking them to collaborate on a project to study sharks and rays in Sabah's rivers, they may have thought I was mad. No river

sharks or stingrays had ever been recorded in Sabah by scientists, although local fishermen told me that they existed. After a year, I was beginning to think that we would never find any - perhaps they were already extinct in the region? However, the enthusiasm of the Fisheries Department for the project continued unabated, and at last we have been shown that the villagers were, naturally, right all along.

"Fortunately the wet weather last year did not interrupt the remainder of our work programme. Regular visits to coastal fish markets have resulted in the collection and curation of a wide range of sharks and rays from the coastal waters of northern Borneo. Discoveries include some sharks which are completely new to science, as well as new species records for the region. This area has been confirmed as one of the international centres of shark and ray biodiversity."

The Borneo River Shark is the rarest of the very scarce freshwater species of sharks and rays for which the Shark Specialist Group survey team has been searching for over a year. The researchers were beginning to believe that the occasional reports of a freshwater shark whose description appeared to match that of the almost mythical Borneo river shark would never be substantiated. Heavy rainfall and continual river flooding severely hampered fieldwork in 1996, preventing researchers and local fishermen from fishing successfully for river sharks and rays. Only a single small specimen of the giant freshwater stingray (*Himantura chaophyra*) was obtained. But, as the river level eventually began to subside last month, the message came in from one of the villages along the Kinabatangan River that a specimen had finally been caught.

The collection of sharks and rays made during the Darwin project will be retained in Sabah for future research. It represents a unique resource for biodiversity and taxonomic research in the region. Duplicate specimens will be housed in other international fish collections, probably including the Natural History Museum in London.

The press release also included an interesting addenda of further background information:

1. The Genus *Glyphis*, River Sharks: These are large sharks, probably reaching about 3 m in length, although most specimens known are juvenile or new-born (because of the difficulty of collecting and preserving large adults). The juvenile female from the Kinabatangan was just 80 cm long. River Sharks have characteristic small eyes and a relatively large second dorsal fin. Their small eyes and slender teeth suggest that they are primarily fish-eaters adapted to life in turbid river waters. Some may also enter seawater. It is uncertain how many species of *Glyphis* exist, but there are at least four or five.

The Ganges River Shark *Glyphis gangeticus* is listed as Critically Endangered in the 1996 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. It was known from only three museum specimens collected over 100 years ago, until a freshly caught adult female (280 cm long) and two fresh jaws were seen last year.

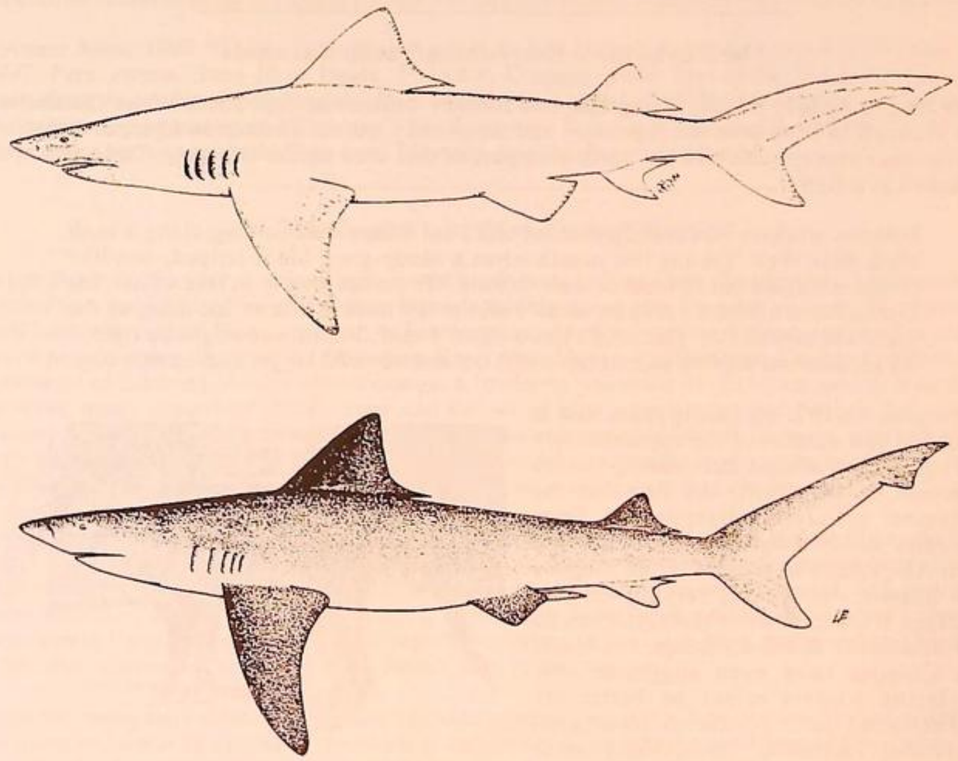
The Speartooth Shark *Glyphis glyphis* was originally known from eight specimens. One small stuffed fish is in a Berlin museum, two small whole preserved specimens

have been destroyed by poor curation and the rest are dried jaws. Its original geographic origin is unknown.

There may also be two other undescribed species (in addition to the Borneo River Shark):

Glyphis species 'A', the Bizant River Shark, is known from two specimens, one lost, from Queensland, Australia.

Glyphis species 'C', the New Guinea River Shark, may possibly be identical to *Glyphis glyphis*. Of seven specimens collected from inshore and in the Fly River of Papua-New Guinea, two whole young specimens have been lost, and the remaining five are represented by their jaws only.



Two species of genus *Glyphis*.
Top - Speartooth shark (*Glyphis glyphis*).
Bottom - Ganges river shark (*Glyphis gangeticus*).
Reproduced from Compagno, L.J.V. 1984. *Sharks of the World, Part 2*. (Rome: FAO).

The rediscovery of the Borneo River Shark is of particular interest to cryptozoologists in that the natives in the area had been adamant that there were sharks in Sabah, despite there being no scientific records of any sharks or rays ever caught in the region. In the end, as we have seen, they were vindicated. This gives more credence to the idea that natives in a certain region often know much more about the local fauna then they are generally credited.

As an aside, Sarah Fowler told me that "the Darwin study has also come up with specimens of what look like two or three new species of coastal shark (dogfish, carpet shark) as well as evidence for at least one 'new' ray in what was previously considered to be a mono-specific genus. However, there are new spp. of sharks and rays recorded every year, particularly from deep water surveys, so that is not terribly surprising." In any case, we can only hope that more new species of sharks and rays will turn up in the future to tantalize biologists and cryptozoologists alike.

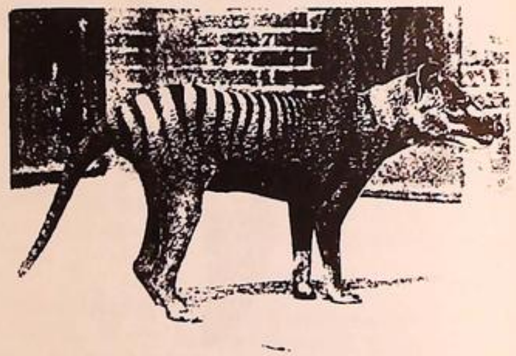
Source: Fowler, S. 1997. Pers. comm. April 14.

The Thylacine - Everywhere but in Tasmania

According to Sydney's Daily Telegraph, two forestry workers in New South Wales (Australia) have claimed to have seen the legendary and supposedly extinct Tasmanian tiger, or thylacine (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*), in the north-west part of that state earlier this year. The report was published as follows:

> Forestry workers Neville Elphinstone and Paul Smart were driving along a bush track near West Takone last month when a sandy-grey, black-striped, dog-like creature walked out in front of their vehicle. "It walked slowly in font of us", Mr Elphinstone, a lifelong sceptic, said. "I said to my mate: 'Look at that thing up the road.' He said to me: 'That looks like a tiger.' I said: 'I think you might be right.'" Mr Elphinstone said the animal had a stiff tail and was a bit bigger than a cattle dog.

This report, which is admittedly rather slim in details, is just another of the approximately 500 sightings of alleged mainland thylacines in recent times, despite the fact that the thylacine officially disappeared from Australia anytime between 1000 BC and 1788 AD, thanks to pressure from dingoes and humans. However, relying on the sightings, it seems possible that thylacines do still inhabit the island continent, and Healy and Cropper have even suggested that "thylacine hunters might be better off concentrating their efforts on [Australia] rather than Tasmania." (Incidentally, some researchers have now become less confident that Tasmania's thylacine population is still surviving).



The Thylacine (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*)
Credit: Fortean Picture Library

Indeed, recent sightings in Gippsland (a rugged and wild area of the Victorian coast, about 60 km

[37 miles] south-east of Melbourne) of animals that sound very much like thylacines have caused some experts to begin to seriously consider the possibility of thylacine survival in Australia. Apparently, a number of thylacines were released at Wilson's Promontory, in South Gippsland, by amateur naturalists around the turn of the century. This would obviously be a logical explanation for the otherwise unexplainable rise in the number of reported sightings in the area since that time.

Finally, there were reports in late March (1997) from Irian Jaya (in New Guinea) which tell of a mysterious animal which has been attacking livestock in a remote area of the country and which, according to descriptions, sounds a lot like a thylacine. Similar creatures were reported in the early 1990's by natives who saw the animals hunting for small animals at dawn or dusk. It was described as having a dog's head, huge jaws, and a thinning body with stripes to the rear and a long tail - a very thylacine-like description indeed. Apparently, it lived in caves or among rocks. Tim Flannery, a well known Australian author and scientist (of the Australian Museum) investigated the reports earlier this year but did not turn up any new evidence. Hopefully, the next expedition in search of the elusive thylacine will be more lucky - wherever they may be searching.

Sources: Anon. 1997. "Tassie Tiger Seen Again." *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, April 4. // Cropper, P. 1997. *Pers. comm.*, June 16. // Healy, T. and P. Cropper. 1994. *Out of the Shadows: Mystery Animals of Australia*. (Chippendale: Pan McMillan Australia). // Neale, G. 1997. "'Extinct' Tasmanian tiger turns up in Indonesia." *The Electronic Telegraph*, March 30. // Rule, A. 1997. "Tiger tales burning bright in Gippsland." *Sunday Age* (Melbourne), June 1.

The Mamlambo - A "Man-Eating" Reptile?

In late April of this year, a strange matter was brought up in East Cape (South Africa) legislature. Agriculture and Land Affairs MEC Ezra Sigwela told the house that Transkei villagers in a remote rural backwater called Bisho are living in fear because of a river monster that has devoured at least seven people trying to cross the Mzintlava River near Mount Ayliff (about 176 km [110 miles] southwest of Durban). Andile Nomabhunga, a freelance journalist in Kokstad, said that he has received many reports of the monster and knows of nine people who had been killed since January, including the latest victim, a schoolgirl who was buried in March. Sigwela, who believes the reports because he was told of them by a respected community leader, promised to ask the National Agriculture Ministry to send nature conservation officials to hunt the beast.

The monster is described as having both fish- and horse-like features, and it apparently sucks the blood and brains from its human victims. Many think that the creature is a legendary beast from Xhosa tribal mythology called mamlambo. It is said to inhabit rivers and, if caught, will provide great wealth. But there are also skeptics, like Eddie Trent of the white dominated Liberal Democratic Party. Trent compared the reported creature to the Loch Ness monster, but added a rather obtuse remark: "as far as I know Nessie hasn't eaten anyone."

After reviewing the evidence given in the reports summarized above, I was inclined to believe that the mamlambo was an oversized specimen of catfish which had attacked and drowned its victims. I thought that the species responsible might even be the electric catfish (*Malapterurus electricus*), which can reach lengths of 5 ft. As its name implies, it is capable of delivering violent shocks of up to 450 volts by way of modified muscle tissue which forms a fine, gelatinous layer beneath the fishes' soft, naked skin. Given that an electric eel, which can kill a horse or human with its discharge, has an output of 550 volts, a 5 ft member of *Malapterurus* could no doubt kill a child

and at least stun an adult human with its discharge. These effects would definitely aid in the subsequent drowning of the victim. Taking these points along with the fact that a catfish could account for the fish- and horse-like appearances of the mamlambo (the horse-like traits include a broad mouth and mane-like barbels), I thought the electric catfish was a very good candidate.

The electric catfish (Malapterurus electricus).

However, in a news report that was released shortly before this issue of *The Cryptozoology Review* went to press, many new details about the mamlambo were mentioned, and my theory of a catfish identity suffered as a result. The new report quoted alleged eyewitnesses who said that the mamlambo has "short, stumpy legs, a crocodilian body," and "the head and neck of a snake." One eyewitness simply described it as "a big snake." The same eyewitness, an elderly Mr. Matshunga, said that "it shines at night with a green light." Apparently, it is very large too: up to 20 m (67 ft) in length, though I would tend to see this figure as a bit of an exaggeration. After reading this new description of the mamlambo, one can see why I have become less sure of my catfish theory. Frankly, I'm not sure what the mamlambo might be, except that it evidently sounds reptilian. Its purputed ability to shine a green light at night is particularly unusual, as no known vertebrate (aside from fishes) is capable of bioluminescence.

In any case, after reading the new report, I am quite sure that the mamlambo has been wrongly accused of its man-eating. Mount Ayliff police said that the victims had drowned in the Mzintlava, which was swollen by heavy rains during the wet season. Captain G. Mzuko said that he had seen some of the "so-called monster's victims" and added: "they had all been in the water for some time and, as is often the case, river crabs had eaten away the soft parts of the faces and throats [this could explain the mamlambo's reputation for sucking the blood and brains from its victims]. In one case, the crabs were still clinging to the body when it was brought in. As far as we are concerned, there were cases of drowning, plain and simple." I would tend to agree. However, Captain Mzuko added that "to the people of the village, the mutilation just proves the monster's existence."

At the moment, I think that there *may* be a real animal behind the mamlambo legend (if it exists, most likely some sort of large unknown reptile), but I think that it has been "wrongly accused" of the deaths of people who have actually been drowned by a rough river. (Harmless animals have been accused of harmful deeds in other parts of Africa - in various parts of west Africa there are

superstitions of a *blood-sucking* demon which is in fact the fruit-eating Hammer-headed bat [*Hypsignathus monstrosus*]). After all, there is no mention of anyone actually seeing the mamlambo actually attacking anyone. Locals probably just assume that the mamlambo really killed the people because of its reputation as a man-eater. In any case, the locals do seem rather adamnant that the mamlambo really exists (even "educated teachers" in the area are sure that it exists), so further investigations into this mysterious monster are certainly warranted.

Sources: Anon. 1997. "S. Africans fear half-fish, half-horse monster." *Reuters*, April 29. // Anon. 1997. "Nature conservation called to hunt East Cape 'monster.'" *The Star* (Johannesburg), April 30. // Anon. 1997. "Mamlambo on the loose." Cape Argus (Cape Town, South Africa), May 16. // Heuvelmans, B. 1958. *On the Track of Unknown Animals*. (New York: Hill and Wang). // Heuvelmans, B. 1978. *Les Derniers Dragons d'Afrique*. (Paris: Plon).

Big Black Birds in the Ruwenzori

The massif of Ruwenzori (or Mountains of the Moon), at the borders of Zaire and Uganda, is a dazzling nonvolcanic mountain range, comprised of a jumble of glacier-flanked peaks, with Mt. Stanley being the highest at 5 109 m (16 763 ft). Below the tree line, the mountains are covered with montane forests (comprised of evergreen trees on the windward side and deciduous trees on the leeward side), and above the tree line is an area covered in afro-alpine vegetation, comprised of small plant species that have grown to immense proportions. This area is often blanketed in low-lying fog. Many normally small plant species grow to huge sizes in this vegetation region, for unknown reasons; groundsels grow to 20 feet in height and heather growing in the region was described by botanist Patrick Millington Synge as being "mighty as trees", after he visited the Ruwenzori to collect plant species in 1934. Smaller, more "normal", plants such as mosses and ferns also exist in these areas. The combination of this strange overgrown afro-alpine vegetation with the foggy weather and the plentiful ferns and moss provide an environment that would remind someone of some primeval fantasy world. The possibilities for the discovery of new species in the area is likely very high, but, to my knowledge, there are very few reports in the literature of possible unknown animals. (This may have something to do with the fact that not many people travel through the region and it is virtually inhabited.)

In recent research, however, I turned up one anecdote of interest to the cryptozoologist in John Preston's *Touching the Moon*, a travelogue about his journeys in the Ruwenzori. On page 35 Preston writes:

> In 1898 one S. Begge [NB: Preston cites his name as Bagge in another part of the book, and after referring to other sources, Stephen Bagge seems to be the person Preston is alluding to - BSR] climbed up to a height of 9,000 feet. His servant climbed higher and came back with reports of finding a small lake [Lake Bujuku - BSR] on the shores of which were a number of black birds the size of sheep. When he tried to get close to them, they bellowed at him like bulls and he ran away. Far from thinking his servant was mad, or effected with altitude sickness, Begge was only sad that he had not seen the black birds himself.

Preston goes on to mention that a detailed exploration of the region was performed in 1906 by an Italian explorer, the Duke of Abruzzi. During a time period of forty days his expedition climbed 30 peaks and mapped the majority of these. Yet they found no evidence or any sign of any "black

birds the size of sheep." It is possible they could have missed the creatures of course.

As for the birds themselves, it is very hard to say what they might be. The details are too scant to warrant any real attempt at identification, so this report will remain an interesting anecdote until more can be turned up on the incident, if it really took place.

Sources: Alden, P. 1995. *National Audubon Society Field Guide to African Wildlife* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf). // Bere, R.M. 1966. *The Way to the Mountains of the Moon*. (London: Barker). // Preston, J. 1990.*Touching the Moon* (London: Mandarin), pp. 35-36.

East Coast Caddy?

Around noon on Sunday, May 4 of this year, Charles Bungay, a fisherman from Fortune Bay (Newfoundland), was boating with a companion in the east part of the Bay when they saw what they thought were floating garbage bags. They decided to go and fetch them but when they approached to within 50-60 ft (15-18 m), a head reared from the water and turned to look straight at the two men. Bungay said: "[a]ll we could see was a neck about six feet long, a head like a horse, but his dark eyes were on the front of its face like a human." It had gray, scaly skin and had ears or horns on its head which were about 6-8 inches (15-20 cm) long. Bungay remembers seeing the creature's mouth, but it wasn't open. He estimated the overall length of the animal to be about 30-40 ft (9-12 m). The creature looked at the two witnesses and then "slid under the water and disappeared." The episode was frightening; Bungay "shook for about five or six hours afterwards" and stated that he had "never witnessed anything like it" in his life.

John Lien, a Memorial University marine biologist (who specializes in cetaceans), was informed of the sighting the next day (May 5) and ruled out a humpback whale, a large basking shark or a giant squid. Lien was more inclined to say that the creature might have been a creature similar to *Cadborosaurus willsi*, British Columbia's famous sea serpent (see Naish's article in this issue). However, Philip Hiscock, an archivist at Memorial University's folklore department, prefers a giant squid (*Architeuthis dux*) identity. I think that, in light of Bungay's account, there are too many details about the head of the creature to just call it a giant squid's tentacle or body. On the other hand, the description does bear a large resemblance to reports of Caddy from B.C., so a similar sea serpent (possibly even the same species) would seem to be a good identity to me.

As a final note, a similar creature to the one seen by Bungay was seen by another Fortune Bay fisherman about four or five years ago. John Hardiman, 66, said: "[i]t was the year the ice floes came further south then we've ever witnessed and flowed up into Fortune Bay ... It was exactly the same as them fellows described it ... But I never seen its head - that was beneath the water. I did see its big long tail, more like those dinosaurs you see on TV. That's what it looked like to me."

Source:Anon. 1997."Fishermen's sea monster likely a giant squid."*The Evening Telegram*,May 6.

Notes of Various New and Rediscovered Species

-- A new species of beaked whale, *Mesoplodon bahamondi*, was described recently from a partial skull collected at Playa Blanca, Robinson Crusoe Island (33 37'S 78 53'W), off Chile. From the

skull (the species has never been identified alive) the authors have determined its closest morphological relative to be *M. bowdoini*, Andrews' beaked whale. The authors also suggest that *M. bahamondi* may be responsible for an unidentified Mesoplodon which has been repeatedly sighted in the eastern tropical Pacific.
Source: MARMAM Eds. 1997. *Post to the Marine Mammal mailing list*. Febuary 1. // Reyes, J.C., K. Van Waerebeek, J.C. Cardenas & J.L. Yanez. 1995. "Mesoplodon bahamondi sp.n. [Cetacea, Ziphiidae], a new living beaked whale from the Juan Fernandez Archipelago." *Bol. Mus. Nac. Hist. Nat. Chile*, 45: 31-44.

-- The leopard cat (*Felis bengalensis*) has been rediscovered on Pulau Ubin, an island off the north-eastern coast of Singapore. The cat is nocturnal, weighs 2 kg (4.4 lb) when fully grown, has a spotted reddish or yellowish coat, and has a characteristic single white spot on each ear. It was thought to be extinct in Singapore, with the last confirmed sighting occurring in 1968 in the Mandai area. However, in March 1997, a adult female was found caught in an abandoned fishing net on Pulau Ubin. The animal is believed to be the only wild species of cat living in Singapore.
Source: Nathan, D. 1997. "Leopard cat - Extinct? Not now." *Straits Times*, April 1.

-- A new mammal species has been described from the Annamite mountains on the borders of Laos, Vietnam and north Cambodia. This region is near to the Vu Quang nature reserve in central Vietnam, where many new animal species have been discovered recently, including the Vu Quang ox (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*) in 1993. The new species is a wild pig, and was dubbed *Sus bucculentus*. It was described in a paper in the March 27 issue of *Nature* by Dr. Colin P. Groves of the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia and colleagues. It has never been seen alive by researchers. The species was first reported in 1892, from two skulls, one of which was lost, but one of which Dr. Groves found by chance much later in Beijing. Because there were no other records of the species, dead or alive, Dr. Groves feared that the animal may have become extinct. However, in January 1995 Dr. Groves and colleague Dr Khamkhoun Khounboline from the Department of Forestry in Vientiane, Laos, procured a partial skull from hunters in the Annamite mountains of Laos. The researchers were able to extract DNA from the skull, and confirmed its designation as a new species. Hopefully, *Sus bucculentus* is still thriving in the remote Annamite mountains, which will likely provide a bevy of new species in the years to come, like its neighbour the Vu Quang reserve.
Source: Gee, H. 1997. "Lifelines: The 'lost world' of the Annamites." *Nature on-line (http://www.nature.com)*, April 3.

-- Lina's sunbird, *Aethopyga linaraborae*, was recently discovered on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao. In 1965, Dioscoro Rabor, a famous Filipino ornithologist, collected specimens of the bird but misidentified and mislabelled them as another sunbird species, the Apo sunbird. The specimens were sent to various museums in the United States and were filed away without a second glance. However, in 1993, an expedition to Mindanao collected what appeared to be a hitherto unknown species of sunbird, and in comparison to species already know , scientists found the old specimens

Lina's sunbird (*Aethopyga linaraborae*).
Credit: Cincinnati Museum Center

secured by Rabor; thus making the species a rediscovery rather than a new species, even though a new name had to be branded to the previously mislabelled Lina's sunbird. The species is four-and-a-half inches long and described by Dr. Robert S. Kennedy, of the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History and Science, as "generally green above and yellow below, with shimmering metallic colors on the head, wings and tail; a brilliant orange patch in the center of the breast, bordered on the sides by scarlet tufts; and a blood-red eye that enhances the overall beauty of this rare sunbird." The species has a limited range of only 300 sq miles (480 sq km; compared to the 84 312 sq miles [135 687 sq km] Mindanao encompasses) but is fairly common and its habitat, the montane moss forest above 4 000 ft (1219 m), and does not seem to be under any threat.
Source: Line, L. 1997. "New Species of Bird Is Discovered (Or Rediscovered) in Philippines." *New York Times*, January 21.

-- A British amateur scientist on a 10 000 mile (6 700 km) trek from Cape Town, South Africa, to northern Africa has discovered four new species of African reed frog on the way. Martin Pickersgill, a long time frog fanatic, suspects he will have spent over £320 000 on the 10 month venture by the time he returns home to England in August. In 1983 he made a similar trip to Natal, South Africa, and discovered a frog species he named after himself: the Pickersgill Reed Frog (*Hyperolius pickersgilli*).
Source: Wilkinson, P. 1997. "Amateur naturalist discovers new frog." *The Times* (London), June 5.

-- An expedition led by Dr. John Lundberg, of the University of Arizona, and financed by the National Science Foundation, has been trawling the deeper waters of the Amazon River in search of the fish life existing there. To date, 240 species, many new to science, have been brought up from between 30 and 150 ft (9 - 45 m). The dominant types of fish living in these regions are catfish and electric fish, which are well-equipped to live in the muddy, nearly pitch black depths of the Amazon. Electric fish create their own electric field to sense out prey, and the catfish have similar electroreceptors as well as chemoreceptors ("taste-buds") all over their body. Many of the new species are very strange: two species of electric fish eat only the tails of other electric fish (one of the species has been dubbed *Magosternachus duccis*); another species of electric fish has a strange soft organ of unknown use which projects tongue-like above its chin; and among the catfishes discovered are species which are transparent and ones that are armor-plated, as well as a tiny 8 mm long species which possesses both of these traits. No doubt many more species await discovery in the hidden reaches of the Amazon; indeed, there is one area near the mouth of the Rio Negro that drops to 300 ft, unfortunately out of the reaches of Lundberg's nets. No one will venture to guess what species may be living there, but no doubt further exploration of the Amazon's waters is warranted.
Sources: Bille, M. 1997. "Fishing in South America." *Exotic Zoology* vol. 4, no. 2 (March/April): p. 1-2. // Yoon, C. K. 1997. "Amazon's Depths Yield Strange New World of Unknown Fish." *New York Times*, February 12.

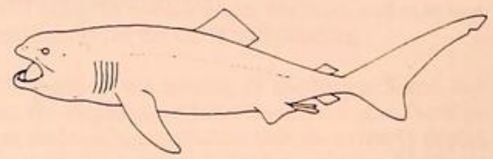
-- Five new species of fish, including a catfish described as "dinosaur-like[,] armored [and] covered in bony plates", were discovered recently by a Conservation International team collecting in the Tahuamanu and Manuripi River basins in Bolivia.
Source: Bille, M. 1997. "Fishing in South America." *Exotic Zoology* vol. 4, no. 2 (March/April): p. 1-2.

Assorted News

-- In *TCR* Vol. 1 No. 3, p. 7, there was mention of strange carnivorans in southern Egypt who had killed three people and ravaged livestock in night attacks. Now, another news report has come to my attention which states that "inhabitants of the Cairo suburb of Qattamiya are living in a state of siege after 23 people were savaged by wolf-like desert creatures, said the daily al-Ahram." Police and five emergency services vehicles are patrolling Qattamiya at all times. The report also mentioned that "residents thought they were safe after one of the animals was killed on Sunday [March 30, 1997], but there have been several attacks since then." In the item on these man-killer carnivorans in the last issue, it was written that one of the creatures had been killed and was being sent to a veterinary unit for examination, but no identity for the creatures has ever surfaced. I can only guess that the creatures are little to be excited about, just feral dogs or hyenas etc., as I mentioned last issue.
Source: Anon. 1997. "Desert animal terrorises Cairo suburb." *The Electronic Telegraph*, April 4.

-- The first expedition to New Zealand waters to search for the giant squid (*Architeuthis* sp.) ended recently, without any encounters with the elusive creature. The expedition, comprised of three teams from National Geographic magazine and the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History and headed by teuthologist Dr. Clyde Roper (of the Smithsonian), lasted about two months. The teams had been searching the undersea Kaikoura Canyon, a 6 000 m (19 000 ft) deep trench off the South Island, using undersea video and still cameras baited with fish juice to try and attract a giant squid, so that they could obtain footage and photos. The giant squid has never been seen alive in its habitat. Despite the failure, the National Geographic plans to return later this year to resume the search; this time they will be trying to mount cameras on sperm whales (the giant squid's main predator) in order to obtain footage of the squid and to help direct the expedition to squid-rich areas. The new expedition will also be using a two-man minisub and a radio-controlled submersible for the hunt. In the meantime, the last expedition was not a total loss; it recorded "the most comprehensive vertical look through the water column that has been done anywhere in the world," according to Geographic photographer Emory Kristof.
Source: Anon. 1997. "Expedition fails to find giant squid off New Zealand." *Associated Press* press release, April 8.

-- A tenth specimen of megamouth (*Megachasma pelagios*) was recently obtained near Toba, a seaside town on the eastern coast of central Japan halfway between Osaka and Nagoya. It was found on May 1, 1997, and is only the second female ever found. It is 5 m (16.4 ft) long and weighs about 1000kg (2200 lb).
Source: Morrissey, J. F. 1997. *Pers. comm.*, May 2.



Megamouth (*Megachasma pelagios*)
Illustration by Richard Ellis

-- Loren Coleman reports that Bigfoot Research Project, run by Peter Byrne in Hood River (Oregon), has used up its funding from the Academy of Applied Sciences, and is therefore at an end. As is usually required for such large scale projects, a report will be out shortly (it is expected to focus on the Patterson film). In any case, another project, the North American Scientific

Institute, is being formed to continue the effort to uncover evidence for the existence of sasquatch. It is also based in Hood River, and has some of the same staff as the now defunct Bigfoot Research Project, although it is directed by Jeff Glickman. Peter Byrne will not be part of NASI, but is attempting to raise money to start his own project.
Source: Coleman, L. 1997. *E-mail to the Fortean Mailing List*, May 2. // Moore, J. 1997. *Pers. comm.*, June 19.

-- On June 10 (1997), video footage surfaced in Turkey which allegedly shows the Lake Van monster. The footage was taken by Unal Kozak, a 26 year-old Van University teaching assistant with a deep interest in the monster. The next day (June 11) the videotape appeared around the world on many different news stations, which broadcasted about 15-20 seconds of the footage (I'm not sure what the full length is). I have not seen the film, but Gordon Rutter described it as showing "something big in [a very] close shot, a large hump followed by a much narrower and mostly submerged [tail-like] section. At the front of the hump was a constant stream of bubbles. The first part of the footage concentrated on the hump and then zoomed out to show the whole thing. Then the camera moved along the back section." The object had an estimated length of about 20 m and width of about 1-2 m. It was filmed rather than close to shore. The object appears to moving, but this could also simply be the action of wind and water against an inanimate object. However, there is at one point some extra movement with associated splash motion (thanks to David Hearder for these points). Most people I have heard from about the film either think it is a hoax, an inanimate object (such as a tree trunk) or simply have no idea of what it might be. A copy of the footage is being sent to Cambridge University for analysis. (The film is also available on-line at http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9706/12/fringe/turkey.monster/)
Sources: Anon. 1997. "Sea monster or monster hoax?" *http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9706/12/fringe/turkey.monster/*, June 12. // Hearder, D. 1997. *Pers. comm.*, June 11 and 13. // Rutter, G. 1997. *Post to the Forteana Mailing List*, June 12.

Thanks to:

Martin Adamson, Steven Cole, Paul Cropper, Richard Ellis, Sarah Fowler, David Hearder, John Moore, Darren Naish, Cheryl Perkins, Michel Raynal

for clippings, articles, reports and opinions

Two Possible Cryptids from Precolumbian Mesoamerica

by Andrew D. Gable

INTRODUCTION

The Indian tribes of North America have a mythology particularly rich in legends of gods, deified heroes, and immensely powerful monsters. The fantastic nature of this mythology is lessened in some regards and increased in others as one travels further south, into Mexico and the countries of Central America.

The Maya, one of the first inhabitants of the region, told of alternating cycles of creation and destruction of worlds, hidden races of men, and demons in animal form. One of these animal-demons was called Camazotz, and he supposedly took the form of a gigantic bat. The Camazotz ("snatch bat") has been, for the most part, ignored by cryptozoologists. However, based on reports of bat-like creatures from throughout the area, and the palaeontological record, I surmise that, living in Mesoamerica, is not a pterosaur, as some cryptozoologists believe, but an as-yet unrecognized type of bat.

Among the later civilizations in Central America is that of the Aztecs. Most members of the Aztec nobility had some animal or object that served as a spiritual advisor and protector. A ruler late in the Aztec Empire, Ahuízotl, had as his totem animal a small, unidentifiable, rodent-like creature. I have tentatively identified the ahuízotl as a type of otter, different from the common otter described by the Florentine Codex as aitzcuintli, possibly an until-now unrecognized species which inhabited Mexico in the recent past.

These are not the only possible cryptids from ancient Mesoamerica. The Aztecs believed in a big cat called cuitlamiztli; after the Spaniards arrived, the animal was known as the onza. In 1986, a possible specimen of the creature was shot in Sinaloa State, in northwestern Mexico, and sent to a laboratory for examination. However, scientific identification of the cat is still pending.

Several controversial glyphs depicting "elephants" appear in the writing of the Maya. Some say that these glyphs are evidence for survival of prehistoric elephants, while others have seen them as evidence for pre-Columbian contact with Asia. Most archaeologists declare that they clearly depict stylized macaws. Comparing known macaw glyphs with the supposed elephant glyphs, I believe that they do, indeed, represent macaws.

Other animals from the tales of the Aztecs which may or may not be merely mythical beings include the tlatecuhtli, the toad-like "earth monster"; the cipactli, a crocodile-like monster which lived in the sea; and even the "feathered serpent" Quetzalcoatl, which supposedly dwelt in northern Mexico.

THE CAMAZOTZ, OR "DEATH-BAT"

Around 100 B.C., a peculiar religious cult grew up among the Zapotec Indians of Oaxaca, Mexico. The cult venerated an anthropomorphic monster with the head of a bat, an animal associated with night, death, and sacrifice (1). This monster soon found its way into the pantheon of the Quiché, a tribe of Maya who made their home in the jungles of what is now Guatemala. The Quiché identified the bat-deity with their god Zotzilaha Chamalcan, the god of fire.

Popol Vuh, a Mayan sacred book, identifies Zotzilaha as not a god, but as the cavern "The House of Bats" (2). This cavern was home to a type of monstrous bat called camazotz (Fig. 1); one of which the hero Hunahpú. Camazotz has been translated as "death bat" (3) and "snatch-bat" (4). It is recorded in chapter 10 of this book that the Camazotz's call was similar to "eek, eek" (5). A vastly different story appears in Chapter 3. Here a demon called Camalotz, or "Sudden Bloodletter," clearly a single entity, is identified as one of four animal demons which slew the impious first race of men (6).

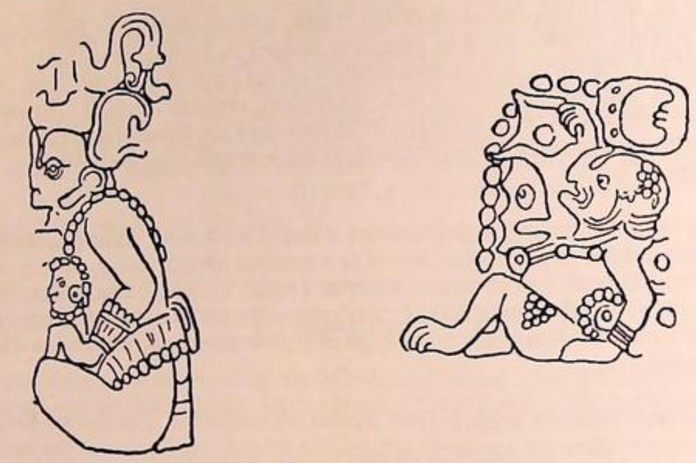


Fig. 1 - Maya hieroglyphics of the camazotz. Note the peculiar nose in each drawing (similar to the noses of the Phyllostomid bats), and the bat-like wing in the drawing on the right. Reproduced from Seler, 1904 (2).

In the Latin American region, it seems that the ancient belief in the "death bat" survives even to the present day. Several cultures have traditions of bat-demons or winged monsters; for example, legends of the h'ik'al, or Black-Man, still circulate among the Zotzil people of Chiapas, Mexico. Perhaps revealingly, the h'ik'al is sometimes referred to as a "neckcutter" (7). Other bat-demons include the soucouyant of Trinidad and the tin tin of Ecuador (8).

Yet another similar creature in folklore appears in the folklore of rural Peru and Chile. The chonchon is a vampire-type monster; and it is truly bizarre, even for a legendary creature. It is said that after a person's death, the head will sometimes sprout enormous ears and lift off from the

shoulders. This flying head is the chonchon; its sound, as recorded by Jorge Luis Borges, was like "tui-tui-tui" (9). Could the legends of the chonchon have sprung from the same source as the camazotz legends?

But what creature was the basis for the camazotz legend? Most archaeologists believe that the monster was based on the common vampire vat (*Desmodus rotundus*), a bat traditionally associated with bloodletting and sacrifice (10). Another suspect is the false vampire bat (*Vampyrum spectrum*), due to its large size and habit of attacking prey around the head or neck (11).

One of the most prominent and commonly mentioned features of the camazotz is "a nose the shape of a flint knife" (12), which could be an exaggerated interpretation of the nose-leaf possessed by members of the Phyllostomidae, or leaf-nosed bats. The vampire bat is a relative (or member) of this group; thus we are once more forced to look at *D. rotundus*, or its relatives, as suspects (13).

In 1988, a species of fossil bat related to *Desmodus rotundus*, but 25 percent larger than it, was described as *D. draculae*. It was described on the basis of two specimens from Monagas State, Venezuela, and a third, from São Paulo State, Brazil, was described in a 1991 article by E. Trajano and M. de Vivo. The Brazilian specimen had not yet been dated when the article was written, but the two biologists suggest a "relatively recent age" for the skeleton. They refer to reports circulating among local natives of large bats which attack cattle and horses; these reports may suggest that *D. draculae* still lives (14).

Its recent age and large range suggest that *D. draculae* could have co-existed with the Quiché, giving rise to the legends of the Camazotz. Trajano and de Vivo also speculate that the bat may have fed on larger prey than did normal-sized vampire bats (15); possibly even humans?

Several other stories supporting the idea of a large bat-like creature have come out of Latin America in the last century. A report from 1947 of a creature usually presumed to have been a living pterosaur may in fact have been of a large bat. J. Harrison saw five "birds" with a wingspan of about 12 feet. They were brown, featherless, and beaked (16).

The next report of a bat-like monster from the area is a story told by a Brazilian couple, the Reals. One night in the early 1950s, they were walking through a forest outside of Pelotas, Brazil, when they saw two large "birds" in a tree, both of which alighted on the ground (17). Although reported as winged humanoids, the proximity of the sighting area to the Ribeira Valley, where the Brazilian specimen of D. draculae was found, forces one to wonder whether the Reals' "birds" were actually bats.

In March, 1975, a series of animal mutilations swept the countryside near the Puerto Rican town of Moca, and during the "flap" a man named Juan Muñiz Feliciano claimed that he was attacked by a large, gray-feathered creature. These bird-like creatures were seen numerous times during the outbreak (18).

But these reports didn't gain real notoriety until the mid-1970s, when there were a number of reports in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas, of large birds or bats. The first report came from the town

of San Benito, where three people reported encounters with a bald-headed creature (19). But rumors had long circulated among the Mexican inhabitants of the town about a large bird-like creature, believed to make tch-tch-tch sounds (20).

On New Year's Day, 1976, two girls near Harlingen watched a large, birdlike creature with a "gorilla-like" face, a bald head, and a short beak. The next day, a number of three-toed tracks were found in the field where the creature had stood (21). On January 14, Armando Grimaldo said he was attacked by the creature at Raymondville. He said it was black, with a monkey's face and large eyes (22). Further reports surfaced from Laredo and Olmito, with a final sighting reported from Eagle Pass on January 21 (23).

The reports cited above, as well as the countless others which await careful researchers, support a conclusion that a mysterious winged creature exists in the deserts and jungles of Mesoamerica. The prominence of the bat in Latin American mythology and the discovery of the recently-extinct *Desmodus draculae* in South America point to the possible identity of the creature as a large, as-yet unknown bat, rather than a living pterosaur, as is generally supposed.

THE AHUÍZOTL - AN AZTEC ENIGMA

One of the strangest and most confusing of all Mesoamerican mythological figures was the water-beast ahuízotl, or "water-dog," a small animal that was depicted as something like a rodent or dog.

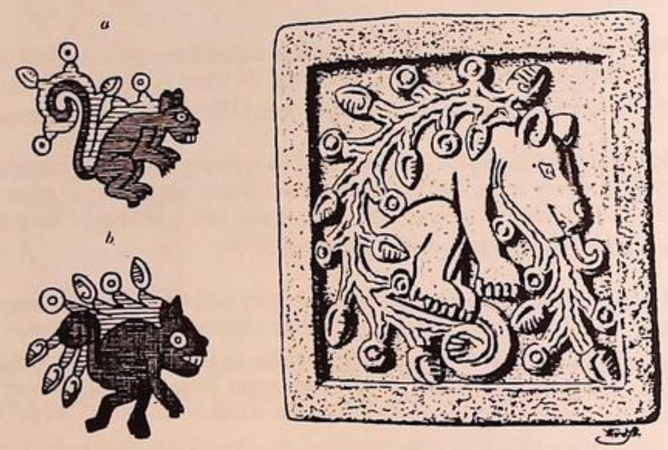


Fig. 1 - Aztec hieroglyphics of the ahuízotl. Reproduced from Seler, 1909 (32).

Some confusion seems to have arisen about the ahuízotl, due to the fact that Ahuízotl was also the name of an Aztec ruler, the predecessor of Motecuhzoma (Montezuma) (24). It is well-known that the water-monster was the symbol of the king (25). However, it seems that the Aztecs thought that the water-monster was a creature in its own right, not merely a mythical beast created as the symbol of the king; the creature has its own entry in Book 11 of the Florentine Codex, (a

description of the plants and animals of Mexico) Here it is described as:

> "... very like the teui, the small teui dog; small and smooth, shiny. It has small, pointed ears, just like a small dog. It is black, like rubber; smooth, slippery, very smooth, long-tailed. And its tail is provided with a hand at the end; just like a human hand is the point of its tail. And its hands are like a raccoon's hands or like a monkey's hands. It lives, it is a dweller in watery caverns, in watery depths. And if anyone arrives there at its entrance, or there in the water where it is, it then grabs him there. It is said that it sinks him, it plunges him into the water; it carries him to its home, it introduces him to the depths; so its tail goes holding him, so it goes seizing him ... The one it has drowned no longer has his eyes, his teeth, and his nails; it has taken them all from him. But his body is completely unblemished, his skin uninjured. Only his body comes out slippery-wet; as if one had pounded it with a stone; as if it had inflicted small bruises ... When it was annoyed - had caught no one, had drowned none of us commoners - then was heard as if a small child wept. And he who heard it thought perhaps a child wept, perhaps a baby, perhaps an abandoned one. Moved by this, he went there to look for it. So there he fell into the hands of the auítzotl [sic], there it drowned him...." (26)

Not much else is to be said about the ahuízotl, as the creature has apparently become extinct - in Mexico, anyway. A similar creature was described by Christopher Columbus, in a letter sent from Jamaica to the King and Queen of Spain on July 7, 1503:

> "A cross-bowman slew a beast that resembled a large cat, but was much bigger and had a face like a man. He transfixed it with an arrow from the breast to the tail. Nevertheless it was so fierce that he had to cut off an arm and a leg. When a wild boar, which had been given to me as a present, caught sight of this beast its bristles stood on end and it fled with all speed ... [the animal] immediately attacked the wild boar, encircled its mouth with its tail and squeezed it vigorously. With the one arm it had left, it throttled the wild boar's throat as one strangles a foe." (27)

The folklore and traditions of the Aztec people has its roots in that of the American Indians of the southwestern states and the Great Plains. We would expect to find relatives of the ahuízotl here, if it was a widespread animal. And indeed we do.

The Hopi Indians of Arizona and New Mexico tell of creatures called pavawkyaiva (water-dogs). These creatures figured prominently in the Hopi creation myth; originally, so the story goes, the Hopis were a nomadic tribe. In a striking parallel to a famous Aztec myth in which the sun-god Huitzilopochtli told the Aztecs to wander until they found an eagle eating a snake, the Hopis were told by a god to wander until they found 'the lake where the pavawkyaivas played', and then to settle there (28).

The Shasta Indians of Northern California also have legends of a "water-dog," although this creature was larger than the ahuízotl:

> "They live in dangerous whirlpools in the river, and appear like huge spotted dogs. They cause the death of persons by drowning. The bodies of those drowned thus are, it is thought, always found covered with spots similar to those of the 'water-

dog' itself." (29)

Similar creatures are to be found in the folklore of lands to the south of Mexico. The Sumu Indians of Nicaragua tell of a 'water-tiger' which dwelt among the rocks of large rivers. The animal "will devour any one swimming in the neighborhood or falling into the water" (30).

So what was this creature? It is nearly impossible to reconcile all the attributes of the ahuízotl with any known animal. The coyote, proposed as a candidate for the ahuízotl's identity by Ferdinand Anders (31), is not a viable explanation, given its decidedly nonaquatic habits. Another candidate, the porcupine, suggested by Eduard Seler (32), is likewise unlikely to be the true culprit, given its nonaquatic habits and the fact that the ahuízotl is described by the Florentine Codex as being smooth (and therefore spineless). Charles Dibble and Arthur Anderson identify the ahuízotl as *Lutra felina* (33), the sea cat or marine otter, which inhabits the coast of southwestern South America; however, as its common name implies, *L. felina* is a mainly marine animal (34), whereas the ahuízotl was described as living "either in a river or somewhere in a spring" (35). Furthermore, Mexico is beyond the northern boundary of the range of *L. felina*, which historically reached (and presently reaches) only to Peru (36). Nor could the ahuízotl have been the sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*) of the Pacific coast of North America, which is also marine in habitat, and which ranges from Alaska to California, only. Another possibility is the river otter (*Lutra canadensis*), which is found in Mexico (37); however, this creature was known to the Aztecs as the aitzcuintli, and has its own entry in the Florentine Codex. Clearly the ahuízotl was some animal sufficiently different from other known animals for the Aztecs to identify it as a separate creature. Perhaps it could have been another species of otter? Listed below are short excerpts from the Codex which support an otter identification.

1. "It has small, pointed ears, just like a small dog."

Most otters do, indeed, have small ears. They seem to me to be rather more rounded than pointed, but they could be described as "like a small dog" (38).

2. "It is black, like rubber; smooth, slippery..."

Most, if not all, otters appear dark, shiny, and hairless (39).

3. "...very smooth, long-tailed."

Most otters have long and flat tails, most notably *Pteronura brasiliensis* (the giant otter), a member of the aonychine family (40).

4. "...its hands are like a raccoon's hands or like a monkey's hands."

Most types of otter have rather man-like hands with which they can grasp shellfish and other food items (41).

5. "...then was heard as if a small child wept."

Many otters do, indeed, make a sound likened to "Hah!" when startled. This could be interpreted as sounding like a child weeping (42).

Furthermore, on a depiction of the ahuízotl reproduced by Eduard Seler, a blade-like structure is seen projecting from under the tail (43). The lower pelvis, pubic bone (baculum) and penis of otters would, indeed, project outward, accounting for this feature (44) - although the size of the projection is doubtless exaggerated.

How do we account for the hand-tipped tail included in accounts and pictures of the creature, and which is the most difficult of all the ahuízotl's attributes to reconcile with any known animal? Very easily, in fact - in *On the Track of Unknown Animals*, in the chapter discussing the iemisch of southern Argentina, Bernard Heuvelmans quotes Dr. Robert Lehmann-Nitsche as saying:

> "The Araucan Indians have similar traditions of a prehensile tailed monster called nurufilu, or zorro-vibora (viper-fox) in Spanish. Since the otter's claws are small, its tail is held to be the object of fear." (45)

Could a similar legend have arisen around the ahuízotl? It seems as though it did not actually have a hand-tipped tail, but was just interpreted as having such.

So, in conclusion, it appears very likely that the ahuízotl was a type of otter, possibly one of some unknown species.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

(1) Day, Jane S. *Aztec: The World of Moctezuma*. (Denver: Denver Museum of Natural History, 1992), p. 65.

(2) Seler, Eduard. "The Bat God of the Maya Race." *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 28 (1904): p. 234.

(3) Goetz, Delia, and Morley, Sylvanus G., trans. *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiché Maya*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), p. 149.

(4) Tedlock, Dennis, trans. *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods & Kings*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 275.

(5) Tedlock, *Popol Vuh*, p. 125.

(6) Tedlock, *Popol Vuh*, p. 71.

(7) Blaffer, Sarah C. *The Black-Man of Zinacantan*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972).

(8) Benson, Elizabeth P. "The Maya and the Bat." *Latin American Indian Literatures Journal* 4 (1988): pp. 118-120.

(9) Borges, Jorge Luis. The Book of Imaginary Beings. (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1969).

(10) Benson, "The Maya and the Bat," p. 104.

(11) Benson, "The Maya and the Bat", p. 105.

(12) Nicholson, Irene. *Mexican and Central American Mythology*. 1967. (Repr. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1985), pp. 37-38.

(13) Benson, "The Maya and the Bat," p. 105.

(14) Trajano, E., and de Vivo, M. "*Desmodus draculae* Morgan, Linares, and Ray, 1988, reported for Southeastern Brazil, with paleoecological comments (Phyllostomidae, Desmodontinae)." *Mammalia*, 55 (1991): pp. 456-458.

(15) Trajano and de Vivo, "Desmodus draculae," p. 458.

(16) Bord, Janet, and Bord, Colin. *Unexplained Mysteries of the 20th Century*. (Chicago: Contemporary, 1989), pp. 304-305.

(17) Bord, Janet, and Bord, Colin. "Monsters On the Wing." In Peter Brookesmith, ed., *Creatures From Elsewhere*, (London: Macdonald, 1989), pp. 28-29.

(18) Bord and Bord, "Monsters On the Wing," p. 23.

(19) Berliner, Don. "Big Bird." *INFO Journal* 6(3) (1977): p. 16.

(20) Clark, Jerome. *Unexplained! 347 Strange Sightings, Incredible Occurrences, and Puzzling Physical Phenomena*. (Detroit: Visible Ink, 1993), p. 25.

(21) Clark, *Unexplained!*, p. 26.

(22) Berliner, "Big Bird," p. 16.

(23) *Ibid.*

(24) Sowards, J. Kelley, ed. *Makers of World History*, Volume 1. (New York: St. Martin's, 1995), p. 319.

(25) Seler, Eduard. "Temple Pyramid of Tepoxtlan." *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin*, 28 (1904): p. 347.

(26) Dibble, Charles E., and Anderson, Arthur J.O., trans. *Florentine Codex*, Volume 11. (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah, 1963), pp. 68-69.

(27) Wendt, Herbert. *Out of Noah's Ark*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 170.

(28) Waters, Frank. *The Book of the Hopi*. (New York: Viking, 1963). p. 34.

(29) Dixon, Roland B. "Water Monsters in Northern California." *Journal of American Folklore* 19 (1906): p. 323.

(30) Lankford, George E. *Native American Legends*. (Little Rock: August House, 1987), p. 99.

(31) Anders, Ferdinand. "Der Altmexikanische Federmosaikschild in Wien." *Archiv für Völkerkunde* 32 (1978): pp. 78-80.

(32) Seler, Eduard. "Die Tierbilder der mexikanischen und der Maya-Handschriften." *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 41 (1909): pp. 390-393.

(33) Dibble and Anderson, *Florentine Codex*, Volume 11, p. 68.

(34) "Threatened and Endangered Species Database - Entry - Otter, marine". *http://www.nceet.snre.umich.edu/~david/html.dir/entry.237.html.*

(35) Dibble and Anderson, trans., *Florentine Codex*, Volume 11, p. 68.

(36) "Threatened and Endangered Species Database - Entry - Otter, marine". *http://www.nceet.snre.umich.edu/~david/html.dir/entry.237.html.*

(37) Chanin, Paul. *The Natural History of Otters*. (New York: Facts On File, 1985), p. 9.

(38) Chanin, *The Natural History of Otters*.

(39) *Ibid.*

(40) *Ibid.*

(41) *Ibid.*

(42) *Ibid.*

(43) Seler, "The Temple Pyramid of Tepoxtlan", p. 347.

(44) Chanin, *The Natural History of Otters*, p. 8.

(45) Heuvelmans, Bernard. *On the Track of Unknown Animals*. (London: Kegan Paul, 1995), pp. 328-329.

Another Caddy Carcass?

by Darren Naish

1996 saw the publication of Dr. Karl Shuker's *The Unexplained*, one of the most interesting of the new wave "paranormal" books from a cryptozoological point of view. Several cryptozoological items previously undiscussed or unpublished are included in this book, and one of them provides my focus here. It is a photo, apparently mass produced for use as a postcard, depicting what appears to be a *Cadborosaurus* (British Columbia's oft-reported sea serpent) carcass. Shuker does not discuss the photograph, but the accompanying caption states that it was found "on the beach at Camp Fircom, British Columbia, on 4 October 1936." Fig. 1 is my interpretation of the carcass.

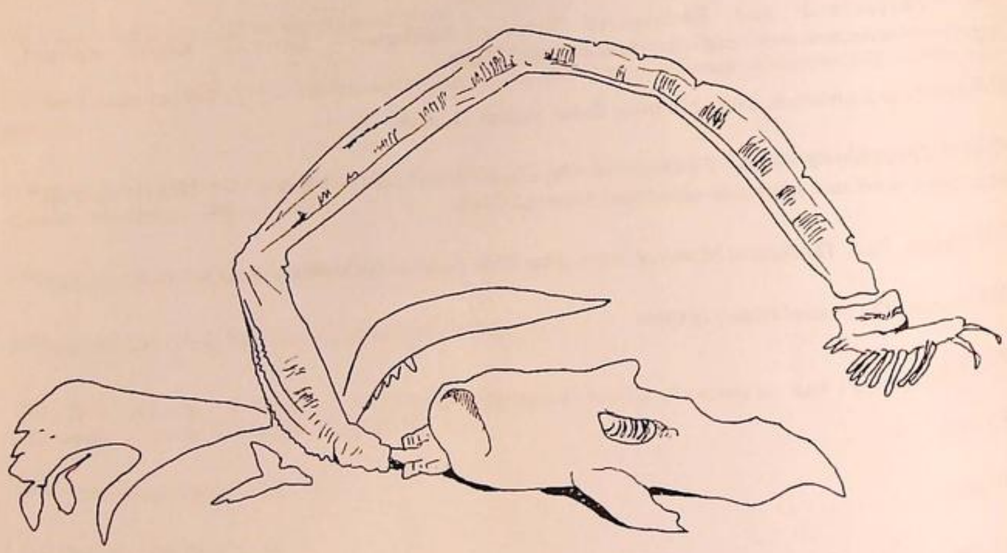


Fig. 1 - The Camp Fircom object. Illustration by author.

Following an initial cursory examination, I was impressed with the photo. Features of the carcass correspond rather nicely with those of the Naden Harbour specimen, a 3-4 m long individual apparently retrieved from the stomach of a Sperm whale (*Physeter catodon*) in the summer of

1937. Surviving photos of the Naden Harbour carcass were discussed by Bousfield and LeBlond (1995) and G.V. Boorman's photo no. 37 was made the iconotype of the new taxon *Cadborosaurus willsi* Bousfield and LeBlond, 1995 (see Figs. 2 and 3). The presence of a second 1930s *Cadborosaurus* specimen would thus be extremely interesting (if not a little uncanny, given that no other "Caddy" carcasses have been reliably reported from any decade).

Fig. 2 - G.V. Boorman's photo no. 37 of an alleged juvenile Cadborosaurus, Naden Harbour, B.C., July, 1937. Reproduced from Bousfield and LeBlond, 1995

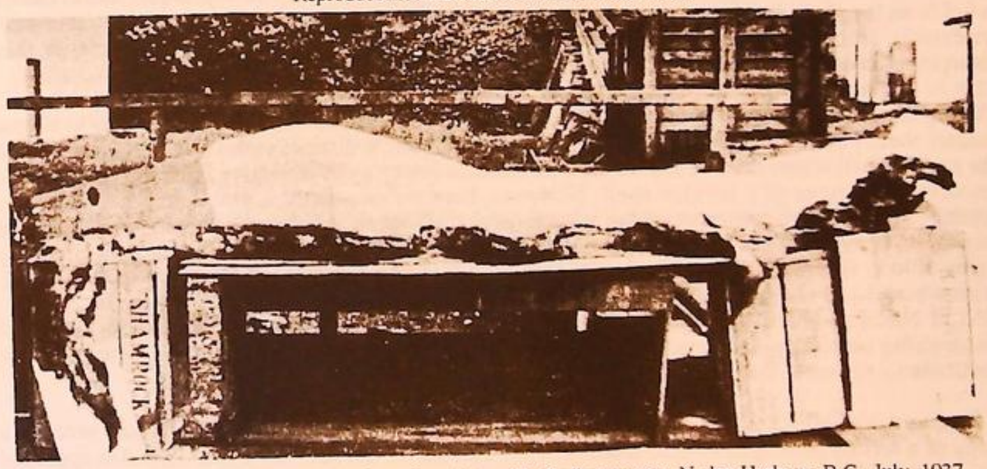


Fig. 3 - G.V. Boorman's photo no. 38 of an alleged juvenile Cadborosaurus, Naden Harbour, B.C., July, 1937. Reproduced from Bousfield and LeBlond, 1995.

Like the Naden Harbour carcass, and also certain eyewitness accounts, the Camp Fircom specimen is elongate with a long, thin body. There are two lateral anterior projections, positioned where we would expect pectoral fins to be. What appears to be a skull is nondescript, massive and shaped vaguely like that of a seal. Mid-way along the skull is what appears to be an eye-socket. These features all correspond approximately with those of the Naden Harbour carcass, and agree roughly with the appearance and proportions reported in cadborosaur sightings. It is not possible to ascribe an accurate length to the specimen, but it appears to be less than 4 m long - this estimate is based on the scale provided by barnacles that can be seen on the rocks that provide the background to the specimen.

Having discussed the characteristics evident in the photograph both with the editors of this magazine and with Dr. Karl Shuker, I eventually took the time to analyze the specimen in the photo in more detail. It is a fake. The long, slim body is clearly the stem of a large plant, most probably a kelp. At the "tail" end it even bears finger-length projections that look suspiciously like the root-like holdfasts kelp grow to anchor themselves to rocks. Toward the "head" end of its length, the plant stem also bears a number of raised, parallel lines that run along the long axis of the stem. Small spines project from these lines. I have been unable to check anything other than a few photos, so am not sure if these spiny ridges are typical of kelp or not, but they are clearly a plant-like characteristic. The long "body" is also composed of one single stem-like structure, rather than the series of vertebrae that would be present if the specimen were a genuine vertebrate carcass.

The fin-like objects are of a nondescript, flattened shape. No determination as to their exact identity can be made, but it appears that they have been specially placed as to form the impression of fins. Much the same can be said for the "skull": it is an amorphous, vaguely skull-like object, but does not exhibit any definite skull characters. It would appear that, if this is so, the object has been specially chosen as it as an "eye-socket" half way along its length.

My examination of this "eye-socket" leads me to believe that it is in fact an object that stands out in relief from the skull, and I think it looks like one valve of a mussel shell. If this is correct, it is near irrefutable proof that the whole set-up is a hoax. However, Dr. Shuker does not agree with this interpretation and argues instead that the dark area is, indeed, a hole in the "skull."

Taking these comments on board, I went back to my copy of the photo. I still think the "eye" is a mussel shell: I can see incremental growth lines on the shell, a distinct umbo (the knob like end of the mussel shell where the two valves connect), and an interplay of reflective light and shadow that endorses my image of a bivalve shell. However, here we encounter a problem. I have become unable to see the dark area as anything but a mussel shell, and I simply cannot imagine it as a hole any more. Many optical illusions work like this: once you see them in a certain way, you are never again able to recapture your initial interpretation. I therefore questioned some impartial persons with whom I had not previously discussed the Camp Fircom specimen (namely, my parents, Mr. W.J.H. Naish and Mrs. S.A. Naish). Without being goaded, they did not regard the "eye-socket" as anything other than an eye socket (to my dismay!), and even when heavily prompted, neither particularly agreed with my interpretation. Perhaps I am wrong.

To support his belief that the dark area truly is a hole in the "skull", Dr. Shuker kindly sent me a copy of a second photograph - also taken at Camp Fircom on October 4th 1936. This also appeared as a postcard but has not yet been published. It is evidently of the same specimen, but this time it is laid out in a line and a rocky bay forms the background (Fig. 4). Again, the "skull" has a dark area

that is in roughly the right place for an eye socket. With only a black and white photocopy to examine, it is not - to me - an obvious hole, but may as well be. Dr. Shuker interprets it as a hole through which the seawater behind can be discerned. I am not convinced, but then I have not seen the original, whereas Dr. Shuker has.

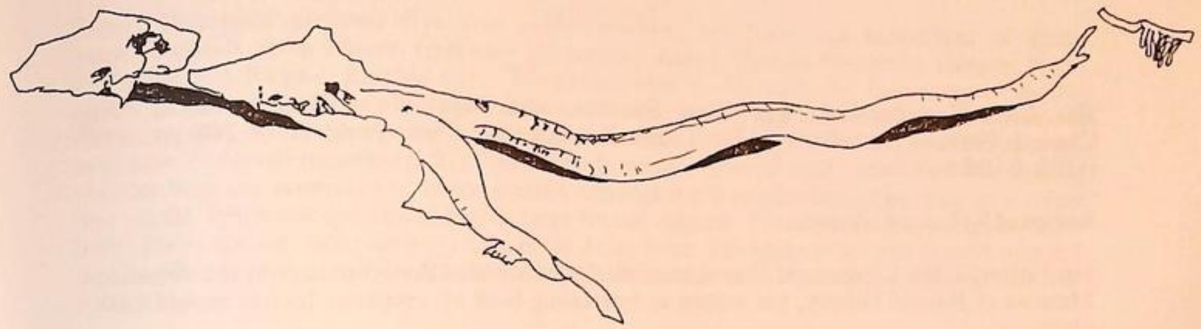


Fig. 4 - Another view of the Camp Fircom object. Illustration by author.

Here, for the time being, the story comes to an end. I am sure that the Camp Fircom object is not a carcass but a montage of beach debris, and I still think that a mussel shell poses as an eye socket. There are other interpretations, however, and until more is known of the history of this object, we should avoid proper conclusions. Perhaps a Caddy, too, is in the eye of the beholder.

Acknowledgement

Kind thanks to Dr. Karl Shuker for the time and material he supplied and to his interest in my pursuit of this matter.

References

Bousfield, E.L. and LeBlond, P.H. 1995. "An account of *Cadborosaurus willsi*, new genus, new species, a large aquatic reptile from the Pacific coast of North America." *Amphipacifica* 1 (Supplement 1): 3-25.

Shuker, K.P.N. 1996. *The Unexplained.* Carlton Books Ltd (London), p. 224.

Reviews and Resources

Books

The Last Neanderthal: The Rise, Success, and Mysterious Extinction of Our Closest Human Relatives by Ian Tattersall. Macmillan (New York) 1995. 208 pp., hbk. ISBN: 0-028-60813-5.

Reviewed by Loren Coleman.

Ian Tattersall, the Curator and Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History, has written an interesting book all cryptozoologists should know about.

I bought *The Last Neanderthal* a few months ago and finally found time to read the book. I found it quite enlightening. For one thing, it is extremely well illustrated with first-rate photos of skulls and mandibles which is something I always like. And secondly, it is about much more than Neanderthals. I almost felt, as I was reading it, that the "last Neanderthal" title was a marketing person's idea, as Tattersall certainly spends a good deal of time with other beings that came before the Neanderthals, as well as the early Neanderthals, too.

The book reflects an interesting trend in what name to use for our unknown hominids, the Neo-Giants' fossil great grandparents. I thought anthropologists were rejecting the use of the *Paranthropus* label. In David Lambert and the Diagram Group's *The Field Guide to Early Man* (New York: Facts on File, 1987), they clearly state that *Australopithecus robustus* was "once called *Paranthropus*" (p. 102). But now we find Tattersall writing (p. 46): "Sometimes regarded as just another species of *Australopithecus*, if a highly distinctive one, this new hominid is now more commonly know by its original name, *Paranthropus robustus*, to reflect its differences from the preceding early humans."

Besides having a full 8" by 11" photograph of the skull of *Paranthropus robustus*, Tattersall has a nice one of *Paranthropus boisei*, which I and others grew up knowing as *Zinjanthropus boisei*. The Ethiopian example of this group is now called *Paranthropus aethiopicus*.

And had you heard about the distinctive renaming of some of the Homo erectus specimens? Tattersall, after talking about the Java and Peking men (still called *Homo erectus*), notes (p. 60) that similar finds from West Turkana, Kenya, are dating to 1.6 million years versus the Chinese/Peking/Zhoukoudian samples at 400,000 to 250,000 years ago. He goes on: "From the beginning, resemblances between the new specimens from East Turkana and those from Zhoukoudian were remarked upon, despite the great time gap between them. But although the resemblances are clear, *Homo erectus* has some specialized features - notably the long, flattened skull and the thick bone from which it is made - that the East African form does not. What's more,

Asian *Homo erectus* is also specialized in a way that *Homo sapiens* is not. Thus while majority opinion probably still inclines toward placing all of these fossils in *Homo erectus*, the whole group being broadly ancestral to modern humans, there is a growing tendency to separate the Kenyan form into its own species, *Homo ergaster*. This species makes a good putative ancestor for both *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens*, but the three don't appear to form a linear sequence. Rather, *Home erectus* seems to be a specialized Asian offshoot - one that eventually became extinct - from the human lineage."

Later, Tattersall presents five fine plates showing craniums and mandibles of *Homo heidelbergensis*, from Mauer, Germany (of course); Arago, France; Petralona, Greece; Bodo, Ethiopia; and Kabwe, Zambia (i.e., "Rhodesian Man"). He calls the first three a "motley assortment of specimens" (p. 64) that seems to fill some kind of gap in Europe, as no evidence of *Homo erectus* or *Homo ergaster* is to be found there. Speaking of the Arago and Petralona evidence, Tattersall remarks (p. 67): "these fossils reveal a hominid with a more 'inflated' looking cranium than any possessed by Homo erectus, although it still recedes behind marked brow ridges that (in the Petralona specimen) harbor large frontal sinuses. These ridges are, however, more individually arched above each eye than in the Asian form. The back of the skull is more rounded than in *Homo erectus*, and the cheeks are inflated somewhat as in Neanderthals, though the face itself is flatter."

In the context of unknown hominid/anthropoid research, investigators need to keep up to date on what is happening in paleoanthropology. Tattersall's book and others like it are excellent elements in our education. This tome is a positive addition to my cryptozoological library.

Periodicals

By Ben S. Roesch

Bipedia. C.E.R.B.I., 32, Avenue Buenos-Aires 06000 Nice, France. Editor: François de Sarre. An interesting magazine, published mostly in French (but with some articles in English and other languages), on the theory of Initial Bipedalism, a controversial and little-accepted theory of an alternate evolution of humans and most other animals (incidentally, one which I do not endorse). The reason it applies to cryptozoology is that its editor and publisher, François de Sarre, is an active cryptozoologist, and *Bipedia* sometimes has articles on relict hominid survival. *Bipedia* also has articles in it which may not be pure cryptozoology but do relate to it in some ways. Although it appears rather infrequently, *Bipedia* has a nice format and design, and if you can read French and are interested in the theory of Initial Bipedalism, this will be a great source of interest to you.

Criptozoologia. Gruppo Criptozoologia Italia. Centro Parchi, Viale Tito Livio, 12 - 00136 Rome, Italy. Editor: Franco Tassi. This magazine is published in Italian or French, and features articles by Bernard Heuvelmans, among others. A highlight of the magazine is its colorful format and great illustrations.

End Page

(By which we inform you of various important matters)

Contributors for this Issue

Loren Coleman has been involved with cryptozoology for many years, and is author of five books and numerous articles on the subject.

Andrew D. Gable is a 19-year old freshman at Lock Haven University in Pennsylvania. His interests include cryptozoology, conventional zoology, and mythology. He can be reached by email at agable@falcon.lhup.edu.

John Moore is a grade 8 student in Park City, Utah, U.S.A., who has been researching cryptozoology for 7 years. He is also interested in paleontology (especially Vendian and Cambrian faunas), and many other areas. He is an avid Wagnerian, and can be can be reached by e-mail at moore4@sisna.com.

Darren Naish is an independent zoological researcher, best known for his interest in dinosaurs, the fauna of New Zealand, cetaceans, and, of course, cryptozoology. He acts as an advisor to colleagues on the vertebrate fossil record and owns a large and ever expanding library. He lives in Southampton (U.K.) with a lizard, a frog and a girl. He can be reached by e-mail at dwn194@soton.ac.uk.

Ben S. Roesch is a grade 11 student in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, with a keen interest in cryptozoological studies and research. He is well-read and very interested in marine biology (particularly sharks), animal predatory behaviour, and general zoology. He also enjoys the wonders of punk rock, mountain biking, skateboarding and surfing.

How to Contact Us

Any correspondence, manuscripts, etc. should be directed to the editor:

Ben S. Roesch
Editor, The Cryptozoology Review
166 Pinewood Ave.
Toronto ON
Canada M6C 2V5
phone: (416) 653-4955
e-mail: bz050@freenet.carleton.ca

Coming Soon in TCR: Enigmatic beaked whales (by Darren Naish); a review of sea monster carcasses from around the world (by Ben S. Roesch); rediscovered mongooses (by Jon Downes); great news coverage and much more! The next issue will be out in October.